

**Big Basin General Plan**  
**Existing Facilities**  
8/22/2002

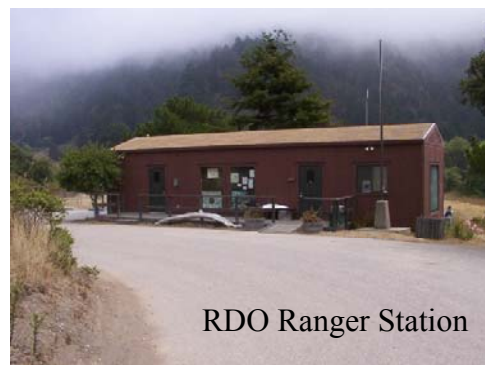
**Existing Facilities**

**Traffic and Visitor Circulation**

State highways 1 and 236 are the primary vehicular public access routes to the park. Highway 236 is accessed from highway 9 at Boulder Creek (southern route) or at Waterman Gap (northern route) creating a loop through the eastern portion of the park. The majority of visitors who are destined for the headquarters area of the park utilize the southern route to avoid the narrow, curvy and sometimes dangerous northern route. China Grade Road connects the northern and southern routes of highway 236 and is an additional access route into the eastern portion of the park. Primarily used by local residents China Grade is not considered a major access for park visitors. Lodge Road, which connects to the southern route of Hwy 236, also provides additional access to the eastern portion of the park and is primarily used by park staff to access park residences and maintenance facilities. Highway 1 (Pacific Coast Highway) offers the only vehicular public access to the coastal areas of the park consisting of Rancho del Oso (RDO) and Waddell Beach. Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (SCMTD) provides bus service to Waddell Beach and Park headquarters twice a day on weekends. Bicycle transport accommodations are currently available on (SCMTD) buses.

Alternative methods of accessing the park are also available by way of horseback, hiking and biking. Day hikers, overnight backpackers and equestrians can access the park via the Skyline to the Sea trail, which extends 26 miles from Saratoga Gap to Waddell Beach and traverses the ridges and valleys of Big Basin State Park. Additional access opportunities for hikers and equestrians is available by way of the Basin trail easement, connecting Portola Redwoods State Park and Big Basin; and the Butano fire road easement, connecting Butano State Park and Big Basin. Hikers can also access the western portion of Big Basin from Ano Nuevo state Park by way of the Whitehouse Ridge Trail.

The vast majority of park visitors enter the park at following three locations: Southern highway 236 boundary, northern 236 boundary and RDO boundary. The routes along 236 were designed to slow traffic by winding through the old growth redwoods providing close up views, experiences and a sense of arrival to a unique natural wonder. The entrance point into RDO is through an indistinct gate, which often goes unnoticed by park visitors. Visitors to RDO are frequently confused by the lack of vehicle access through the park to the headquarters area. Park signs identify entry into the park at these boundary locations, but no visitor contact services are immediately available. The nearest visitor contact along 236 is located at the headquarters



RDO Ranger Station

facility, which is located approximately 5 miles from the northern route boundary and 1.5 miles from the southern route boundary. The closest visitor contact at RDO is located approx. 0.3 miles from the entrance gate at the Rancho Del Oso ranger station. Day users at the headquarters area are expected to pay fees at the headquarters building and day users at RDO are expected to pay there fees at the ranger station or at the self serve fee collection post located at the RDO trailhead.

Visitor circulation within the park primary revolves around the visitor facilities and dense old growth redwood forest located in the headquarters area or at the sandy beaches and interpretive opportunities found at RDO and Waddell Beach. Day use visitors to the headquarters area park their cars in designated day use parking or along the North Escape and Gazos Creek roads while picnicking, day hiking or experiencing interpretive displays. The majority of visitors day hiking in the headquarters area venture no more than 1-1 ½ miles from day use and camping facilities, while only a small percentage hike greater distances to backcountry and beach locations of the park. Day use visitors to RDO park their vehicles at the trailhead / Horse camp parking lot, located near the Ranger station, or at the RDO nature center. From this location hikers, bikers and equestrians access the interpretive trails located within RDO, visit the Nature Center, obtain information at the ranger station or access the backcountry and wilderness areas of the park. Visitors to Waddell beach have a short walk from the large parking lot located to the west of Hwy 1 or the smaller parking are located on the east side of Highway 1.

Overnight campers park at their designated campsites located along highway 236 and Sky Meadows Road and generally use trails and trail connectors to access activities and facilities located in the headquarters area. Campers may also use their vehicles to drive from campsites to the campfire center and day use facilities located in the headquarters area. Backpackers can park at Jay Trail Camp and hike into the backcountry and wilderness areas of the park for overnight trips

### **Day Use Facilities**

Visitors utilizing the day use facilities in the headquarters area of the park generally visit the park headquarters building first to obtain information and pay user fees. The Headquarters building was constructed in 1935 by the CCC and is an impressive example of “Park Rustic” architecture. The building has a dual purpose of providing visitor services and administration space for park staff. The main hall of the building provides interpretive space for park visitors to understand the natural and cultural history of Big Basin and to obtain park information and literature. The side offices provide camper registration services and firewood sales in addition to housing staff office facilities.



The Park store is located across highway 236 from the headquarters building and provides visitors the opportunity to purchase food and outdoor supplies. A deck and outdoor picnic area provide a popular eating area for park visitors.

The Park Nature Lodge is located within the same building as the park store. This lodge contains numerous displays interpreting the natural and cultural history of the Big Basin area. Displays located in the front section of the lodge utilized wood panels, pictures and three-dimensional models as interpretive tools. The rear section of the lodge contains more traditional displays of preserved and mounted wildlife endemic to the park.

North Escape road is located within the headquarters area just off highway 236 and is the primary day use picnic area in Big Basin State Park. A former campground located along Gazos creek road intersects North Escape Road from the west and provides additional day use facilities in the headquarters area. Both facilities provide Restrooms, picnic tables, modern pedestal grills and historic Diablo stoves (see cultural section), many of which no longer have grates on them. Existing tables and grills are spread out along North Escape road in an unorganized random layout. Because there no formal parking spaces located along the road visitors utilize open areas between trees and roadside shoulders to park cars. This system creates a disorganized and chaotic atmosphere during busy park visitation periods. The park utilizes a system of gates along North escape road to control visitor use. As visitation increases the park staff opens gates heading north to increase visitor capacity. The gates remain closed during low visitor use times to reduce maintenance and servicing of these areas. The day use facilities located along Gazos Creek road still retain the original campsites to include: designated parking, fire ring and picnic table per individual campsite. A limited number of large parking areas are also available for group or oversized vehicle parking. All day use picnic locations provide access to the majority of the parks trail system.

RDO offers a variety of visitor experiences to include a nature center, ranger contact station, Theodore J. Hoover Nature Preserve, interpretive trail walks and backcountry access into the park. RDO is host to the 23-acre Theodore J. Hoover Nature Preserve, which offers wetlands habitat and a wide variety of rare and endangered flora and fauna. The nature center, which is run by park volunteers, offers visitors an interpretation of the plant and animal communities associated with the park. The RDO park office is available to visitors during the weekend and provides park interpretation, information and park literature. Located next to the ranger station is a small parking lot, which provides parking for Horse Camp users and a trailhead for hikers, bikers and equestrians.

Waddell beach offers the only public access to the Pacific Ocean from Big Basin State Park. Site amenities include parking, portable toilets, trash receptacles, recycle containers, bulletin boards and a bus shelter. There is a 150-space gravel surface parking lot that provides a stepping of point and staging area for surfers, wind surfers, swimmers, kayakers, and beach hikers. The west portion of the parking lot has undergone erosion from ocean storm decreasing the overall size of the parking area. Favorable wind, surf and swimming conditions generally fill the parking lot to capacity on the weekends.

## **Overnight Facilities**

Big Basin has 13 campgrounds provide a wide assortment of camping experiences designed for a variety of user groups. Visitors are offered camping under the old growth redwoods, within the solitude of a wilderness area, with a large group of friends, within shouting distance of their horses or within the comfort of a tent cabin. Campground infrastructure varies with each campground experience and range from shower facilities and laundry facilities to pit toilets and no running water. With the exception of campground host sites there are no utility hook-ups and campsites suited for large RV's is difficult to find. The majority of RV visitors use small trailers or small self-contained vehicles to negotiated the tight turning radius and small campsites available at Big Basin. Campground facilities are available by reservation only. Although camping is available throughout the year campgrounds are closed when visitor demand is low.

### **BLOOMS CREEK CAMPGROUND**

Constructed in the 1930's Blooms Creek is the oldest existing campground in Big Basin. This 52-unit campsite is located directly off of highway 236 and offers 48 drive-in campsites and 4 walk-in sites. Set under the old growth redwood forest Blooms Creek Campground road is winding and very narrow in spots making it restrictive to larger RV's and trucks. Restrooms, showers, trash receptacles, recycle bins, hose bibs, fire rings and picnic tables are provided at the campground. Intense public use associated with the popularity of this campground has created a sparse understory and compacted soils. Creek campground offers 4 ADA accessible sites.

### **SEMPERVIRENS CAMPGROUND**

Sempervirens campground is located directly to the north of highway 236 and is the first campground visible to visitors entering the park from the 236 southern route. Constructed in the late 1940's this 32 unit campground is also set under the old redwood growth forest with campsites spacing tighter than any other campground in the park. Tight campground spacing and avoidance of redwoods has created a very narrow and winding campground road that is difficult for larger RV's and truck-trailer combo's to negotiate. Intense public use has created a sparse understory and compacted soils within the campground. Restrooms, showers, trash receptacles, recycle bins, hose bibs, fire rings and picnic tables are provided in the campground.

### **HUCKELBERRY CAMPGROUND**

Huckleberry was constructed in 1968 and is located off of Sky Meadows Road. Having 71 units Huckleberry is the largest campground in Big Basin. This campground is actually composed of 3 separate camping experiences consisting of tent cabins, drive-in sites and walk-in sites. Tent cabin camping is operated and maintained by a private vendor and comprises 37 units equipped with 2 double beds, table and a wood burning stove enclosed in a wood framed building and capped with a canvas roof. Laundry services are available to tent cabin users. Walk-in camping consists of 8 sites located 20-300ft from designated parking spaces. The lack of direct car access, reduced traffic noise and increased site spacing enhances the feeling of remoteness at these campsites. The remaining 26 sites are drive-in sites for both RV's and tents. Huckleberry

was better designed to accommodate larger vehicles than either Blooms Creek or Sempervirens Campgrounds by providing a wide roadbed and large turning radiuses. Restrooms, showers, trash receptacles, recycle bins, hose bibs, fire rings and picnic tables are provided in the campground. Due to greater site dispersion and its more recent construction understory and soil compaction appear to be less significant than at either Blooms creek or Sempervirens campgrounds.

## WASTAHI CAMPGROUND

Wastahi is a 26 unit walk-in only campground constructed in 1968 and located off of Sky Meadows road. This campground is sited on a hillside with individual campsites located 50-400 ft uphill from a central parking area. Restrooms, showers, trash receptacles, recycle bins, hose bibs, fire rings and picnic tables are provided in the campground.

## SKY MEADOW AND SEQUOIA GROUP CAMPGROUNDS

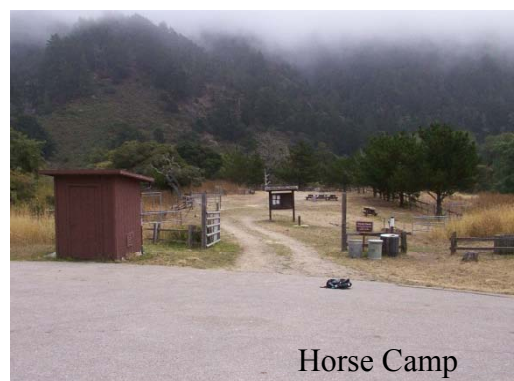
Group camps offer an opportunity for friends, extended families and organizations to participate in an overnight experience at Big Basin. Constructed in 1971 Sky Meadows camp is located off of Sky Meadows Road and is comprised of 2 campsites with a site capacity of 40 people per site. Constructed in 1950 Sequoia Camp is located just northwest of the park headquarters and offers 2 campsites with a 50 person capacity limit per campsite. Sequoia offers close parking to each campsite while sky meadows requires a short walk-in to one of the two sites. Sequoia camp is the more popular group camp and as a result shows greater soil compaction and understory thinning than Sky Meadow. Limitations on camping area are not delineated at either campground, which has promoted a camp anywhere attitude by users and added to vegetation degradation. Restroom facilities, shower facilities, trash receptacles, recycle bins, picnic tables, fire rings and grills are all available at Sequoia. Sky Meadows has trash receptacles, recycle bins, picnic tables, fire rings, grills, pit toilets and offers no shower facilities.

## TRAIL CAMPS

Jay, Lane, Sunset, Herbert, Twin Redwoods and Alder are campgrounds designed for use by backpackers and mountain bikers utilizing the skyline to the sea trail and other remote big basin trails. Jay camp is the only trail camp located within the developed areas of the park and offers backpackers an initial staging area and stepping off location from the headquarters area of the park. Jay Camp offers 8 walk-in campsites accessed from a central parking area and contains restrooms, showers, hose bibs, trash receptacles and recycle bins. All the other trail camps offer from 6-10 campsites and pit toilet restroom facilities. No pets and no open fires are allowed at the trail camps. Road damage along Waddell Road has prohibited maintenance access and temporarily closed Camp Herbert.

## HORSE CAMP

Horse camp is located in the RDO area of the park and offers overnight accommodations for equestrians trail users. The camp consists of 6 sites that may be used individually or together for group events. The site

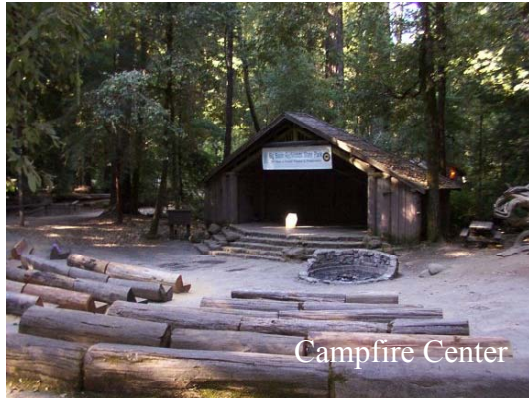


Horse Camp



layout makes it difficult for users to park their vehicles within the actual campsite area so the majority of parking is done in the adjacent trailhead parking lot and ranger station service drive. Horse camp amenities include the following: picnic tables, fire rings, pedestal grills, hitching post, box stalls, water trough, manure disposal, hose bibs and pit toilet.

## CAMPFIRE CENTER



Originally constructed in 1911 and reconfigured by the CCC in 1936 the approximately 800-seat campfire center is currently utilized for interpretive programs, entertainment events and group gatherings. The center consists of wooden benches, constructed from large redwood logs, situated in an amphitheater configuration and facing a covered stage and stone fire pit. With the exception of asphalt service, installed for erosion control, the amphitheater is an excellent example of park rustic architecture. Although occasionally used for daytime activities the center is primarily used for nighttime activities and

serves those visitors utilizing overnight accommodations.

## Trails

With over 83 miles of single track and fire road trail Big Basin offers a wide range of trail activities for hikers, bikers and equestrians. Visitor experiences range from strolling along the 0.6-mile redwood interpretive loop located in the heart of the old growth redwoods to backpacking along the 14.4 miles of Skyline to the Sea trail located within the park boundaries. Bicycles are permitted on paved and fire roads only. There is no legal route for bicyclist to ride from the headquarters area to Rancho Del Oso. Mountain bikes can ride 30 miles of fire roads within the park boundaries. Equestrians are allowed on all fire roads and designated single-track trails and may access 42 miles of park trail. Equestrians may legally ride from Headquarters to Rancho del Oso. Day hikers and backpackers can utilize all public park trails and roads. Overall trail conditions within Big Basin are considered moderate to good.

## Administration and Maintenance Facilities

Administrative office facilities are currently housed in the Headquarters building, south 236-entrance gatehouse and in the Old lodge. Located in the headquarters area and originally constructed in 1908 the Old lodge is currently unused. In 1983 a large redwood tree fell on the old lodge and resulted in the removal of the lobby fireplace room and veranda. Proposals to rehabilitate the lodge as an interpretive center are currently being considered. Originally utilized as staff housing the gatehouse was constructed in 1930 and now provides administrative office space for park management.

The park maintenance facilities are located on Rodgers Road and consist of a maintenance operations office and multiple storage and workspace out buildings. Due to very tight turns

along Sky Meadows road prior to maintenance facility, a put and take materials storage area has been located just north-east of Sky Meadows lower residence along Sky Meadows Road. This allows for easier access by large trucks and equipments borrowing and placing materials. No Parks and Recreation administration or maintenance facilities exist at Rancho Del Oso. It is therefore difficult for maintenance staff to effectively service a location which is more than and a 50 minute drive from the current maintenance facility.

## Utilities

The utilities and infrastructure at Big Basin are antiquated and require frequent up keep for them to function. The wastewater collection system and treatment plant is an on-site system that was originally constructed in 1936 and has since had numerous problems and has undergone many temporary fixes over the last 65 years. Wastewater is collected, treated, and released into Waddell Creek. Untreated wastewater has inadvertently entered Waddell Creek due to the age and condition of the system. There are current plans to upgrade the existing wastewater collection system. RDO facilities utilize septic systems for wastewater treatment.



Failed Retaining Wall

Water collection and treatment for park facilities is also served by an on-site system. Water is collected at sempervirens reservoir, created by the damming of Sempervirens Creek in 1952, and piped to a water treatment plant located 1000 ft downstream. Currently the concrete spillway for the dam is heavily cracked and in need of repair. From the treatment plant the water is then gravity fed and pump to various water storage tanks where it is distributed to various park facilities. A retaining wall along a portion of the water treatment access road has collapsed causing major damage to the shoulder of the road. Unless the damage is repaired it is likely the erosion of the road will continue and may jeopardize the serviceability of the water treatment system. Water supply at RDO is provided by treated spring water.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company provides electricity to the park by way of overhead utility lines. Propane tanks provided gas to all facilities requiring heat or heated water. Pacific Bell provides telephone service within the park by way of overhead lines.

## Employee Housing

Big Basin State Park is located within and managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Santa Cruz District. Employee housing is allocated at the district level. Employee housing at Big Basin serves both employees working at Big Basin and employees working at other parks located within the Santa Cruz District. Big Basin State Park offers 19 structures and 8 trailer locations available as seasonal and permanent employee's residence. Of the 18



Headquarters Area Residence

employees currently working at the park 17 of them are currently residing in Big Basin or other Santa Cruz District housing. The majority of the housing available at Big Basin is located at the lower residence area along Sky Meadows Road and the upper residence area along Lodge Road. These are single-family units and offer private bathrooms, shower and laundry facilities. Cabin units at Jay camp offer bunk house style accommodations for seasonal employees. There is no indoor plumbing within the cabins so employees utilize the nearby public restroom and shower facilities. Employee residences are also available at Rancho Del Oso, Headquarters area and the maintenance area. The high cost of living in the area necessitates park housing opportunities for employees.

### **Accessibility of Park Facilities**

Due to the age and lack of recent construction and retrofitting projects Big Basin facilities remain largely ADA noncompliant. The only recognized ADA compliant facilities within Big Basin are 6 recently retrofitted accessible campsites and the recently reconstructed park maintenance office. Although 3 other campsites are identified by the park as ADA accessible and are used by disabled visitors, they do not meet the full requirements set forth in ADA. Many of the facilities can accommodate disabled visitors and staff, but do not fully meet the criteria set forth in ADA regulations and would require addition effort by the user or assistance from other people. Examples of existing facilities designated as ADA compliant, but not fully meeting ADA criteria include: Accessible parking stalls which do not meet min slope criteria: Accessible routes requiring grasping and twisting of doorknobs: and improper signage on otherwise ADA accessible restrooms. Additional information on the accessibility of Big Basin State Park can be found in the June 2000 Santa Cruz district, Mountain Sector, Big Basin Redwoods State Park Accessibility Survey.

### **Waste Management**

The California Public Resources Code requires state agencies and facilities to meet waste diversion and recycled product procurement goals. In addition to the waste diversion goals, all State agencies are required to buy recycled materials from 11 different categories ranging from paper and plastic to paint, solvents, and lubricating oils.

Under Assembly Bill AB 75 the California Department of Parks and Recreation is required to:

- Divert at least 25 percent of their solid waste from landfills or transformation facilities by January 1, 2002, and to divert 50 percent by January 1, 2004, through source reduction, recycling, and composting activities.
- Develop and adopt an integrated waste management plan by July 1, 2000.
- Submit an adopted integrated waste management plan to the California Integrated Waste Management Board (Board) by July 15, 2000.
- Designate at least one solid waste reduction and recycling coordinator to oversee the implementation of their integrated waste management plan and in-house waste reduction and recycling program.



- Use the Board's State agency model integrated waste management plan if it has not submitted a plan to the Board by January 1, 2001 (or, if the plan it submitted was not approved).
- Submit an annual report on the previous year's diversion amounts and activities by April 1 of each subsequent year; the first annual report is due April 1, 2002.
- In order for California's state and local governments to achieve waste reduction mandates, they must commit to a Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and buy-Recycled policies. Waste reduction is a comprehensive approach involving waste prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting practices (Establishing a Waste Reduction Program at Work, Gainer and Associates). As part of this statewide approach Big Basin State Park, as well as all state parks, is mandated to achieve waste reduction as part of its daily operations. The following is a description of the current waste reduction measures currently being utilized at Big Basin.

Big Basin State Park uses 15 collection locations to collect recyclable product such as aluminum, plastic and glass. A private contractor is on call to pick up recyclables as determined by state park staff. Building products that are in good shape are reutilized for other construction products while those determined unusable are sent to recycle centers or ground up for mulch. Recycled building materials include iron, steel, wood and plastic.